

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DEBATE OVER FUTURE OF SWEDISH NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE FUTURE ENERGY PROGRAM ANNOUNCED BY THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT FEB. 1 HAS PROVOKED LIVELY DEBATE IN THE PRESS AND PARLIAMENT ON THE QUESTION OF BUILDING NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS. ISSUE--WHICH HAS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC INTEREST--HAS DIVIDED SWEDISH POLITICAL PARTIES ALONG UNUSUAL LINES, WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY (VPK) SPLITTING ON THE ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER OLOF PALME PRESENTED THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT'S ENERGY PROGRAM FOR THE NEXT DECADE AT A SOCIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY ENERGY CONFERENCE IN SUNDSVALL ON FEB. 1.

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THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM CALLS FOR THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:

(A) CONSTRUCTION OF THE 11 NUCLEAR REACTORS (OF WHICH 4 ARE ALREADY COMPLETED) ALREADY AUTHORIZED BY THE RIKSDAG (BUT WHICH HAD BEEN CHALLENGED BY ANTI-NUCLEAR POWER ENVIRONMENTALISTS); (B) CONSTRUCTION OF AN ADDITIONAL TWO REACTORS AT FORSMARK IN 1985; (C) LAUNCHING OF AN ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM, WITH CONSUMPTION INCREASES LIMITED TO 2 PERCENT YEARLY WITH ZERO GROWTH AS AN ULTIMATE TARGET BY 1990 (PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT EMPLOYMENT IS NOT AFFECTED ADVERSELY) AND (D) EXPANSION OF PRESENT HYDROELECTRIC POWER FACILITIES BUT WITH A BAN ON CONSTRUCTION OF STATIONS ON PREVIOUSLY UNTOUCHED RIVERS.

3. SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM CAME FROM SOME UNUSUAL QUARTERS, INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT'S MOST PERSISTENT CRITIC, THE MODERATE (CONSERVATIVE) PARTY. PARTY LEADER GOSTA BOHMAN TOLD THE RIKSDAG THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM WAS "WELL BALANCED." MORE QUALIFIED SUPPORT CAME FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S RIKSDAG ALLY, THE LIBERAL PARTY, WHICH EXPRESSED GENERAL APPROVAL OF THE PLAN BUT DEFERRED A FINAL DECISION UNTIL A PARTY STUDY IS COMPLETED IN MARCH.

4. THE SHARPEST CRITICS OF THE PROGRAM WERE CENTER PARTY LEADER THORBJORN FALLDIN, WHO HAS EMERGED AS THE UNOFFICIAL LEADER OF THE ANTI-NUCLEAR POWER FORCES, AND COMMUNIST PARTY (VPK) LEADER CARL HERMANSSON, WHO TERMED THE PROGRAM "COMPLETELY WRONG." HOWEVER, WHILE VPK'S PRINCIPAL NEWS ORGAN NY DAG SUPPORTED HERMANSSON'S OPPOSITION, CHARGING THE PALME GOVERNMENT WITH "SIMPLY INTENDING TO TRY AND GUARANTEE CONTINUED CAPITALIST GROWTH BY CARRYING OUT THE MOST EXPENSIVE NUCLEAR PROGRAM PER CAPITA FOR ANY COUNTRY," THE ORGAN OF THE NORTHERN WING OF THE PARTY, NORRSKENSFLAMMAN, HAD A DIFFERENT VIEW. ASSERTING THAT THE VPK HAD ORIGINALLY GONE ALONG WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO BUILD 11 NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS, THE PAPER NOTED THAT "NOW THE VPK LEADERSHIP WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE CHANGED ITS MIND AND CLAIMS THAT ONLY POWER STATIONS ALREADY IN OPERATION SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE USED. THIS MEANS REJECTING A DECISION ALREADY APPROVED BY THE RIKSDAG. WE CANNOT AGREE WITH THIS LINE OF THOUGHT WHICH HAS COME ABOUT UNDER PRESSURE OF A TEMPORARILY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORKED UP BODY OF PUBLIC OPINION." THE PAPER CONCLUDES WITH THE APPEAL "LET US REVERT TO COMMON SENSE ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE." END UNCLASSIFIED

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5. COMMENT: NORRSKENSFLAMMAN'S POINT ABOUT A "TEMPORARILY WORKED UP BODY OF PUBLIC OPINION" AGAINST CONTINUED NUCLEAR

POWER CONSTRUCTION SEEMS WELL TAKEN. IN RECENT MONTHS MUCH OF THE SWEDISH PRESS (INCLUDING THE INFLUENTIAL DAGENS NYHETER) HAS WAGED AN EMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS ON THE GROUNDS OF THE RISK THEY POSED OF NUCLEAR RADIATION AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. AS A RESULT OF THIS CAMPAIGN, AN OPINION POLL OF 500 PERSONS TAKEN BY SWEDISH RADIO AND PUBLISHED ON JAN. 23, REVEALED THAT 43 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED WERE OPPOSED TO NUCLEAR ENERGY, WHILE ONLY 20 PERCENT WERE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARDS IT. THIS CONTRASTS WITH A POLL TAKEN A YEAR EARLIER BY THE SAME ORGANIZATION WHICH REVEALED THAT 35 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED SUPPORTED NUCLEAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT WITH ONLY 23 PERCENT NEGATIVE.

6. CENTER PARTY LEADER FALLDIN, APPARENTLY CONVINCED THAT THE ANTI-NUCLEAR FEELING IN THE COUNTRY PROVIDES AN EFFECTIVE ISSUE TO USE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, HAS ASSUMED AN EXTREME POSITION ON THE QUESTIONS, AT ONE POINT EVEN ADVOCATING THE DESTRUCTION OF EXISTING POWER STATIONS. IN A LIVELY DEBATE WITH PRIME MINISTER PALME THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT, FALLDIN INSISTED THAT HE WAS MISQUOTED ON THIS POINT AND THAT HE MEANT TO SAY HE WAS OPPOSED TO ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, BUT DOES NOT FAVOR DESTRUCTION OF STATIONS IN BEING. FALLDIN'S CAMPAIGN AS LEADER OF THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS IS PERHAPS A LOGICAL EXTENSION OF HIS BACK TO NATURE, "GREEN WAVE" THEME, WHICH CONTRIBUTED CONSIDERABLY TO HIS STRONG SHOWING AGAINST PALME IN THE 1973 ELECTIONS. (IN A MEETING AMBASSADOR HAD WITH THE CENTER PARTY LEADER LAST AUGUST (A-265), FALLDIN INDICATED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE "NO GROWTH" CONCEPT ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT SURE HE UNDERSTOOD ITS IMPLICATIONS COMPLETELY.)

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7. HOWEVER, WITH THE GOVERNMENT NOW DECIDED ON ITS PROGRAM, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY APPARATUS CAN BE PUT INTO OPERATION TO WIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. NUMEROUS SCIENTISTS HAVE RECENTLY APPEARED ON SWEDISH TELEVISION (A GOVERNMENT CORPORATION) INSISTING THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO NUCLEAR POWER IF THE COUNTRY IS TO MAINTAIN ITS STANDARD OF LIVING. ALREADY THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT FALLDIN MAY HAVE OVERREACHED HIMSELF, AND THE CONCLUSION OF POLITICAL OBSERVERS WAS THAT HE CAME OFF SECOND BEST IN HIS DEBATE WITH PALME ON THE ISSUE. FURTHERMORE, AS THE GOVERNMENT STRIVES TO EXPLAIN TO THE SWEDISH PUBLIC THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MOVING AHEAD IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD, SUPPORT FOR SUCH DEVELOPMENT SEEMS LIKELY TO INCREASE.
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